

STUDIES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Vol. 2, No. 2, 2011, pp. 60-69

www.cscanada.net

ISSN 1923-1555 (Print)

ISSN 1923-1563 (Online)

www.cscanada.org

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*:

A Postcolonial Study

Noorbakhsh Hooti¹Masoud Ahmadi Mousaabad²

Abstract: This study is intended for readers who are interested in literature, its relation to colonialism and its wake. It has been structured around a series of studies and researches in the history of colonization and the position of literature and in particular the rise of the genre of novel. It studies the links and relation of literature, history and politics. Like most books in this field it contains much that is non-literary and engages with various issues in history, politics and critical theories. In choosing to centre this study on literary fiction and its relation to imperial and colonial activities, it has not desired to value the nature of literature or even discuss the political side of post-colonial studies; rather it has preferred to raise questions about those very issues. It has also pointed out to the biased role of the modern media in distorting and turning a deaf ear to the suppressed marginal voices. In relation to this issue, the study has given a fair amount of space to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is a very unique piece of literary novel that can be judged in relation to the imperialism and its practices during the last century.

Keywords: Josef Conrad; Genre; Postcolonial; Imperialism; Media

INTRODUCTION

A broad historical, ideological and sociological chain is connected to the post-colonial criticism that needs the focus of attention. The main concern of this study is to analyze the subject of imperialism as a continuous wave still in progress. This study means to do a survey primarily in order to seek the imperial history, study the relation of novel as a political and cultural medium for imperial propaganda and the shifts of perspectives in *Heart of Darkness*.

Therefore what this study is trying to point out is the fact that history is repeated over and over. In relation to this the position of literature has been evaluated and discussed, primarily as a medium of political propaganda of the 18th and early 19th century. The rise of the novel has been related to the rise of imperial powers in the 18th century. This political misuse of literature has formed false ideas and assumption of the 'true' identity of the West and the East, which eventually established cultural and

¹ Assistant Professor, English Department, Faculty of Arts, Razi University, Iran, E-mail: nhooti@yahoo.com

² Assistant Professor, English Department, Faculty of Arts, Gonbad Institute of Higher Education, Gonbad Kavous, Iran, E-mail: ahmadimousa@yahoo.com

*Received March 29, 2011; accepted April 20, 2011.

ideological boundaries between the Occident and the Orient. Such issues which are the main focus of many postcolonial studies, evaluate the very 'how' and 'why' of such discourses, which make an attempt to give importance to the silenced and marginal voices, who cry out to be heard and cared.

The history of imperialism might convey the fact that, the Western desire for colonial lands is now just history. Today, while we live in the modern era of 21st century, issues like colonization and imperialism are simply referred to as disgraceful and inhuman acts. However many critics believe that this modern era is still experiencing imperial deeds and influences, which are primarily established and achieved in forms of cultural plans. Today, the modern technology has facilitated many things for mankind. Consequently such drastic changes in the technology and science have reformed the unfashionable ways of behavior and life style. An example in relation to this study is the fading position of literature

Nowadays people prefer to see a 2 hour movie instead of reading a 200 page novel. Everything should be time saving in order to get the most in the least amount of time. The replacement of literature with media, particularly TV is in fact erasing the true position of written texts, however in the same sense it is also used as the political means of propaganda. In this process the media play a central, perhaps even a defining role. Nevertheless the modern technology has not succeeded in defining and transmitting the real truth of things. The marginal voices are still kept silenced by those who have the authority and they define what should be said and how it is supposed to be said. Therefore no matter whether one is dealing with an 18th century colonial novel or listening to the daily news, he or she should be aware of the fact that power and knowledge are inseparable features in defining the discourse. So the authority over discourse questions the reality of the true narration.

Today we still see the marginal voices who cry out their will to speak but are hardly given this opportunity. In this respect both the media and literature are unwillingly the victims of the political desires, who echo the cultural dominance and superiority over the world. Today you might hardly catch someone reading a novel or a short story, but no doubt there is a magic box in every home performing the old task of the imperial plans.

Globalization is the modern issue that is assumed to be following the same imperial tasks in the modern era. The new tendencies toward a unique economic, political and cultural destiny have erased the cultural differences and diversities. As most critics have evaluated this new notion as a Eurocentric plan, therefore many judgments have accused the very concept of globalization with an imperialistic nature.

By 1815 the world had already known some four hundred years of continuous European imperialism. In a sense it was in deed the result of the expansion of European powers over other continents. Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, French and British colonial empires had followed one another throughout these four centuries

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998):

Around the late eighteenth century, the term 'imperialism' was used to describe the government, and the policies of Napoleon the third, the self-styled 'emperor', and by the 1870s it was used cautiously between the political parties in Britain. Yet the very imperialism was a mid nineteenth century invention, and the generation after 1870 to 1914 has come to be known, in some significant sense as 'the age of imperialism' (p. 122-127).

There is a general agreement that the word imperialism, as a conscious and openly advocated policy of acquiring colonies for economic, and political advantages, did not emerge until around 1870, and from then it became a dominant and more evidently aggressive policy amongst the European states for a variety of political, cultural and economic reasons.

As described in *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (2000) :

The first use of the word imperialism dates back to 1815 and in the most general sense, it refers to 'a policy, practice or advocacy of extending the power of domination over a

nation especially by direct territorial acquisitions or by gaining indirect control over the political or economic life of other areas' (p. 582).

Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) believe imperialism in its more recent and general sense refers to the "acquisition of an empire of overseas colonies, which is associated with the Europeanization of the globe; it is therefore an attitude toward the world and performs a definite function and a method of behavior." Still it is one of the progressing subject matters that has its own classifications and history to be discussed. However the expansionist policies of the European countries triggered in 1880, taking the advantage of the modern industrial power, has been described as the age of the classical imperialism.

The term colonialism and what came after it, is an important factor in defining the specific form of cultural exploitation, which developed with the expansion of Europe over the last 400 years. Although many earlier civilizations had colonies, but certain number of crucial factors entered into the construction of the practices of the new imperialism. Said (1978) offers the following distinction "Imperialism means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory; "colonialism", which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory." (p. 8)

Therefore, what Said is implying here is that imperialism and the formation of empires is the consequence of the practice of colonization that has been an aspect of all the periods of history in which one nation has extended its domination over one or several neighboring nations. Edward Said uses imperialism in this general sense to mean 'the practice, theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan centre ruling a distant territory a process distinct from colonialism, which is the implanting of settlements on a distant territory. In this sense, imperialism draws heavy criticism in the grounds that historically it has been frequently employed for the economic exploitation in which the imperialist super powers have utilized the other countries as the sources of the raw materials and cheap labors, shaping their economies to suit their own interests, and keeping 'Other' people in poverty. Different Critics and scholars have commented on the whole process of imperialism. Thomson (1966) points out that "the famous British economist, J.A. Hobson and following him Lenin attributed the colonial expansions of these years to special economic forces at work in industrialized nations of western and central Europe." This meant that the basic motives were also the real impulses of the capitalist nations for the cheap raw materials, good investments and markets and also fresh fields of exploitation. So it was undeniable that the search for lucrative yet secure overseas investment played a very great part in the European urge to acquire colonies at the end of the nineteenth century (p. 23).

The anti-colonialist movements in the colonized countries have a long history to consider, since it has had its own ups and downs through history. It has, at some points, been silenced by severe reactions and at some other stages it has supported the other oppositional acts and resistance of the colonized nations. Consequently, these movements have chained up together in order to achieve the ideal result at some point in the coming future. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) believe that "decolonization in its broad sense refers to 'the achievements of independence in colonized regions like Africa and Asia that occurred in an active period of decolonization, from 1945 to 1960'" (p. 63). It was after the World War I (1914-1918), that the national liberation movements became more common, though they did not reach their full power until the end of the World War II (1939-1945). The independence of Pakistan and India from Great Britain and the First Indo-china War, are the examples of the triggering move toward the liberal movements. Still a series of such anti-colonial movements emerged in the Third world at about the same period of time, which established decolonization as a political process, in which the conflicting alternative principles frequently involved peaceful negotiations or even violence in extreme circumstances following a revolution. Some of these anti-colonial struggles did lead to wars, such as the Algeria War (1954), it was nevertheless bloody. Pakenham (1991) comments that "some other liberation movements took democratic leaders, like Mahatma Gandhi, who supported the idea of non-violence to achieve independence. His movement is still known as one of the great revolutionary anti-colonial movements in deed." (p. 21-23)

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) "most critics in the field of post-colonial studies such as Fanon, Miller, the Leninist doctrine and many others reinforced such resistance and put into practice the nationalist movements and shaped other revolutionary changes within the colonized

societies.” (p. 65) Lenin’s anti-imperial doctrine was concerned with the freedom of the worker’s world and rights. By the time of the Second Party Congress in 1920, Lenin enjoined every communist party to stand against the imperial policies, and according to Pakenham (1991) :

Demand the expulsion of their own imperialists from these colonies, to inculcate among the working people of the colonies and the oppressed nations, and to carry on a systematic agitation among the troops of their country against any oppression of the colonial peoples (p. 46).

Consequently the progression of such doctrines, sequenced and later on established organized confrontations among the oppressed nations in order to revolt against their colonizers. These movements also attracted more significant intellectual figures to emerge in the anti-colonial struggles of the period, such as Franz Fanon in Algeria, Gandhi in India and Augustine Nero in Mozambique. However, there are ambiguous questions that why such resistance did not happen at an earlier stage to confront the colonization at the first place. Well some critics like Brown (1989) have discussed that the one and only advantage that the whole process of colonization brought for both the “colonizer and colonized, was indeed modernization” (P. 12). Due to the western education of the colonized elites, a seemingly unstoppable process of decolonization started to affect the colonized countries. Education was primarily offered in these countries to value the European culture above their own and perceive themselves as the potential inheritors of the European political and cultural systems. Education exemplifies the limitation and benefits of the postcolonial theory, which means that the positive and negative consequences of education, as a tool were used against the colonized. In contrast to the physical interactions and abuses of colonization, education dominates the colonized indirectly, appearing humble in its purpose of bettering their uneducated or the so-called savage minds. Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (1998) explain “Education the locally English or British as normative through critical claims to universality of the values embodied in English literary texts, and it represents the colonized to themselves as inherently inferior beings- ‘wild’, ‘barbarous’ and ‘uncivilized’”(p. 426).

Whether in India, Africa or West Indies in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the first nationalists were also modernizers, whose programs were less to effect a rejection of the colonialist culture than to adopt its practices; however these early decolonizers helped the emergence of even greater liberal movements. Primarily they sought to reconstruct the social values and modernize their society by using the standard European values, in order to seize their independence out of it. In colonies where a majority of culture or cultures had been invaded and suppressed by the colonial practices, the process of resistance was more active. Therefore a cultural progression and modernization movement began to reconstruct the colonized society in order to meet the weaknesses that had allowed the colonization in the first place. As a matter of fact the awakening of the native origins and cultural commonness brought the majority together to form a tense and powerful chain to confront the colonizers. Generally, there was a period of modernized return to the origins that emphasized the commonness and supportive national togetherness to enrich the forgotten and undermined values. Surely the very first motive for education in such colonized nations was not to inspire the consequential resistance; however the confrontation of both cultures in these areas gradually questioned the matter of the cultural supremacy and authority of the colonizers over the colonized. Therefore what decolonization involves is in fact a process of revealing and dismantling the colonialist power in all its forms. This includes dismantling the hidden aspects of those institutional and cultural forces that had maintained the colonialist powers even remained after the political independence was achieved.

Today the term colonialism is more concerned with the growth of the superpowers such as the United States, whose dominant power over the world has replaced the old fashion tradition of colonization. Nowadays an obscure act of supremacy is even taking place. Culture, as it is discussed in the post-colonial theory, is the major criteria in the new era of colonization.

1. JOSEPH CONRAD IN THE FIRST CENTURY

Why to read Conrad now? What good is Conrad in the twenty-first century, in a time of globalization, in a time of the United States' worldwide economic and military omnipresence and colonization, in a time that many wars are going on around the world and when new media are fast displacing the printed literature as the primary influence on the way people think, believe and behave? Surely one will be interested in knowing the contemporary position and implications of Conrad's novels, since many critics discuss imperialism as one of the highly political modern issues.

When Conrad's *Lord Jim* (1900), was regarded as a modern novel, he too, was in fact recognized as a current figure in literature, as Conrad, the sailor and the writer, had something new and contemporary to tell the world about it. Ever since his death, many associations have been entitled to his name and have formed societies to present his ideas and ideology of the world. A decade has passed and a new century has begun and the interest in Conrad continues. He is steadily entering the twenty-first century; conferences are held all over the world devoted to his works. Also in 1970 The Modern Language Association meeting formed Joseph Conrad's society in America entitled, '*Conrad, Our Contemporary*.' No doubt there are many ways to understand this popularity, but one should also study the earlier literary criticism and understand the changes within the contemporary literary criticism which separates it from the earlier works. According to Mongia (2005), the traditional English criticism separated the literature of the empire and colony from the high tradition of English literature, today much attention is paid to the ways in which colonial encounter shaped metropolitan culture, including its literature. The boundaries between metropole and colony, high literature and colonial fictions, seem now so tenuous to have almost disintegrated.

Although not all the ideas and criticisms support Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* as a unique piece of literary effort, but quite a number of essays confront the issue of Conrad's racism and others more or less successfully defend it from Achebe's angry charges. Still if such claims were influential and in fact Conrad was an admirer and the spokesman of imperialism and in Achebe's terms a 'bloody racist', then why has he achieved more appreciation than disapproval around the world? Of course Edward Said has dedicated so much to the reputation of Conrad and his great novel *Heart of Darkness*, but a wide range of readers have at least felt a sense in Conrad's works. This also raises many more questions that how can a work like *Heart of Darkness* intimate so many minds, when some of the readers do not necessarily share the same experiences and values with Conrad? How can his work provide a docking point for such a vast range of personalities, attitudes and ideologies? And how can someone peculiar as Conrad speak out for so many?

Certainly what makes Conrad different from the other colonial writers, who were his contemporaries, is that, for reasons colonialism totally turned a Conrad; a Polish refugee, into an employee of the imperial system, to become self-conscious of what he did. Said (1993) comments that:

The discourse of resurgent empire [In *Heart of Darkness*] proves that the nineteenth-century imperial encounter continues today to draw lines and define barriers. Strangely, it persists also in the enormously complex and quietly interesting interchange between former colonial partners, say between Britain and India, or between France and the Francophone countries of Africa. But these exchange tend to be overshadowed by the loud antagonisms of the polarized debate of pro- and anti-imperialists, who speak stridently of national destiny, overseas interests, neo-imperialism, and the like, drawing like-minded people aggressive Westerners and ironically, those non-Westerners for whom the new nationalist and resurgent (p. 24).

Miller (2005) has also come to a reasonable answer by commenting that:

Heart of Darkness is probably one of the novels that the reader wants to read for him or herself, in order to see whether the accusations in such essays are accurate. It is one of the contemporary novels that is so often read, taught or written about, partly because it comes into being and more consideration due to the charges against its ideology. After all Achebe's criticism of the novel has brought a great deal of attention for this novel

and many more criticism has followed it even in the twenty-first-century. Conrad's novels are still the main focus of study in many postcolonial curriculums, and each generation of readers, teachers and critics respect it as a postcolonial novel. (p. 5)

Miller further on approves that the influence of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* "evoked" many intellects and produced many writings, which all were 'the necessity context' for the next generation of twenty-first-century African, Indian, South and North American, Australian and Caribbean novels" (ibid). No doubt Miller's criticism can help us to know the high importance of Conrad's work to reach a better understanding of the ideology of imperialism and its actions. Such 'ideology', has in fact silenced 'the metaphysical elements' that critics of *Heart of Darkness* scorn in silence.

One of the main observations that Miller discusses in relation to the metaphysics, is that Conrad is in fact an "ironic writer and adeptness in reading him requires a skill in reading irony, which is no easy accomplishment." (ibid) Probably it is not common these days to stress out Conrad's irony, but in fact it is one of the important issues that critics like Miller are still concerned with. In describing irony as a 'metaphysical element' of this novel he (2005) declared:

The fundamental feature of irony is that it is a performative use of language. This performative dimension consoles, promises excuses and allows us to perform all kinds of performative linguistic functions. In this case according to Laurence Davis' essays and analysis, Conrad's irony is "fortifying" rather than "decadent" or "paralyzing". "Fortifying" would be another performative effect of ironic literary language. Davies means that Conrad's irony fortifies the reader against being taken in by the various illusions with which his fictitious characters are bewitched. Irony also fortifies the reader to be able to take without flinching the dismaying political and psychological insights his novels express. In addition, however, if pervasive irony in Conrad's discourse that gives power to change the reader's political beliefs and actions. This happens, for example, through a pitiless revelation, in a fictive rendition such as *Heart of Darkness*, of the evils imperialism, colonialism and economic exploitation of the third world countries by those of the first world, especially, these days, by the United States. I also see the further investigation in Conrad's work as a major and timely project for the future. I am grateful to Davis for instigating me to think again about this issue (p. 7)

The ironic revision of *Heart of Darkness* that Miller calls for, also answers many racist charges that have been Conrad's accusation. The ironic tone that is applied by Marlow leaves many more questions unanswered for the reader. Therefore because of this delicate use of ironic techniques by Conrad, something unveiled is left for the reader, which does not necessarily go with the positive side of imperialism, but tries to help the reader to unveil the reality of imperialistic practices. In this sense *Heart of Darkness* is in fact one of the most influential novels that touches the deepest thoughts and feelings of its reader and makes him or her think and ask many questions about the identity of imperialism. Of course the issue of imperialism did not start or end in Conrad's novel; perhaps he was trying to make the reader wander about the future of such colonial and imperial practices by the so-called super powers in the world. Therefore, the global Conrad, unveiled the true identity of imperialism and prophesizes the future of this modern issue.

2. HEART OF DARKNESS: THE HISTORICAL ACCOUNT OF EUROPEAN COLONIZATION

Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, which is highly regarded more as an autobiographical work, deals with the months he spent in Congo and is highly drawn from the personal experiences he had. *Heart of Darkness*, is in fact Conrad's masterpiece that has as its basis a true, historical account of European exploration and colonialism. There is no doubt that the Congo journey was the prime influence that pushed Conrad, the sailor, to become Conrad, the novelist. Much of the biographical information of

Conrad's journey is available from the letters and the diary he kept while he was there. His story of the sea, the jungle, and the river Congo relates to the social and political instability of mankind at the heart of Africa, which is ironically the heart of human darkness and all this is just a reflection of his own life and varied experiences. Most critics believe that *Heart of Darkness* is the artistic projection of Conrad's personal journey to the Congo River in 1890 and of course it is one of the most complex novels since it deals with the racial, political, social and imperial issues, which are still contemporary matters and subjects of discussion.

2. HEART OF DARKNESS AND THE QUESTION OF RACIST DISCOURSE AND NARRATION

When Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* first appeared almost a century ago, it was rarely noticeable for the critics of that time to realize that although this novel was in some ways new for its time and also it seized modern themes, it did lack the subjectivity of African voices. Although the reality of European civilizing mission was revealed for many of its readers, the Africans were rather (in Achebe's terms) 'talked about', and did not have a voice in the novel. In the recent years there have been great arguments among the literary critics and scholars around the world about *Heart of Darkness*, whether it is a racist novel or not. Postcolonial critics like Chinua Achebe, Nicholas Harrison, Cedric Watts Charles Saravan, Wilson Harris, Peter Mwikisa and Edward Said have pondered over this question and have answered it in different ways.

For sure Conrad's narrative techniques has used Marlow to present more than just an imperialistic world-view, since Said (1993) claims that Conrad wanted his readers to know that how the non-Europeans of that time were treated:

Independence was for whites and Europeans; the lesser or subject peoples were to be ruled; science, learning, history emanated from the West. Conrad's realization is that if, like narrative, imperialism has monopolized the entire system of representation-which in the case of *Heart of Darkness* allowed it to speak for Africans as well as for Kurtz and the other adventurers, including Marlow and his audience... Conrad's narrative techniques allow Marlow to not speak only for himself, but also Africans and Kurt (P. 23)

Some other critics like Henryk Zions; an African lecturer who taught for many years in Kenya and Zimbabwe, also defended Conrad against Achebe's claims. The main argument of Zions that went against Achebe was that Conrad's racist imagery and attitudes which were 'conventional' in his day, do not reflect his own opposition toward Africans:

He [Achebe] is definitely doing an injustice to Conrad when writing about his alleged racism and antipathy to black people, which makes no sense when we remember Conrad's words full of sympathy and pity about the enslavement of Africa in the Congo... (Zions, 1982, p.122)

Still such discrepancies among the critics have raised the question of what exactly the racist discourse and narratives among the critics is. Chinua Achebe an African critic, held racist charges against Conrad's novel and particularly criticized the racist manner of narrative in *Heart of Darkness*. His criticism was first published in a 1974 lecture at the University of Massachusetts, that even went against the critical position on Conrad among the Africans and people who were up to then sympathetic to it. Later he continued his argument that Conrad's image of Africa is Eurocentric and in fact he is 'a bloody racist' because his novel lacks any liberal and humanitarian manner'' (Achebe, 1963, p. 261). In his famous essay, Achebe rejects the reliability of the novel as a postcolonial novel, since it was and still is the dominant image of Africa in the Western imagination.

Heart of Darkness, therefore, has enacted a trial in which Conrad's image of Africa is called into question, since Achebe's racist recognition of the novel is that Conrad's image of Africa has silenced the African voices; both throughout the novel and also in the field of criticism. His accusation of using racist

discourse lies in the order of representation of stereotype characteristics of the natives and the deliberate use of the narrative techniques that were applied to emphasize the physical differences. One of the examples of Achebe's reference to the novel is a passage in which Marlow describes the African appearances in the novel:

Now and then a boat from the shore gave one momentary contact with reality. It was paddled by black fellows. You could see from afar the white of their eyeballs glistening. They shouted, sang; their bodies streamed with perspiration; they had faces like grotesque masks- these chaps; but they had bone, muscle, a wild vitality, an intense energy of movement, that was a natural and true as the surf along their coast. They wanted no excuse for being there. (Achebe, 1963, p. 30)

In criticizing Achebe's racist observation of Conrad's narratives, Harrison (2003), claimed that such representation with stereotyped characteristics of the natives is associated with the 'natural' and the 'wild', because Marlow later remarks that 'going up the river was like traveling back to the earliest beginnings of the world', which is an indication of primitiveness. In Harrison's view the presence of many comparable passages in *Heart of Darkness* does not necessarily prove the racism of the text as a whole, on the other hand it portrays a 'real' picture of what was seen and observed in reality by Conrad the real observer and later narrated by Marlow, the spokesman:

Suddenly as we struggled round a bend, there would be a glimpse of rush walls, of peaked grass-roofs, a burst of yells, a whirl of black limbs, a mass of hands clapping, of feet stamping, of bodies swaying, of eyes rolling, under the droop of heavy and motionless foliage. The steamer toiled along slowly on the edge of a black and incomprehensible frenzy. The prehistoric man was cursing us, praying to us, welcoming us- who could tell? We were off from the comprehension of our surroundings; we glided past like phantoms, wondering and secretly appalled, as sane men would be before an enthusiastic outbreak in a madhouse (Achebe, 1963, p. 60).

Harrison (2003) further comments:

Marlow's terms could be in fact explained in terms of 'realism', because 'his description of men with glistening eyeballs is partly because of his prejudice and fears, which make him, perceive them that way'. Other critics like Cedric Watts make the same argument, stating that 'Conrad is offering an entirely plausible rendering of the responses of a British traveler in 1890 to the strange and bewildering experiences offered by Congo and the passages are justified on realistic grounds.' (p. 23-25)

In fact one of the argumentative issues that Achebe (1963) has repeatedly criticized in Conrad's story is in fact the performance of unreliability in the novel. In his essay, criticizing the form of narration of the novel he claims:

It might be contended, of course, that the attitude to the Africans in *Heart of Darkness* is not Conrad's but that of his fictional narrator, Marlow, and that far from endorsing it Conrad might indeed be holding it up to irony and criticism. Certainly Conrad appears to go to considerable pains to set up layers of insulation between himself and the moral universe of his story. He has, for example, a narrator behind a narrator... But if Conrad's intention is to draw a cordon of sanitaria between himself and the moral and psychological malaise of his narrator his care seems to me totally wasted because he neglects to hint, clearly and adequately, at an alternative frame of reference by which we may judge the actions and opinions of his characteristics (p. 7).

As it has been mentioned earlier, the unreliable opinions that are expressed by Marlow are in fact responsible for the judgments made to it. This characteristic of the novel has rather made judgments difficult, since one might argue that, for instance, all the opinions expressed in the text are Eurocentric aspects, but necessarily this is not to say that all those aspects are fundamentally imperialistic and racist. Although racism was the centre of many Eurocentric imperial plans, its place has varied within the varied colonial discourses.

Although many other Africans critics did praise Conrad's literary ability to portray the true reality and inner psychological reality of mankind, but at the same time they did not consider the novel 'about Africa' at all. For them Africa is merely the incidental setting in which Conrad describes the Western ego as it disintegrated from isolation and loneliness. From the perspective of such critics, Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* is simply an embodiment of the weak idealism that is incapable of supporting the ideas of European imperialism in colonial territories. On the other hand Africa merely serves as a suitable metaphor and Africans are seen merely as objects of this debate not subject. Such arguments have in fact enabled postcolonial critics to see that whether Conrad's justice and humanitarian concerns for the victims of European colonial expansion overseas are incidental themes or not.

CONCLUSION

Even though we live in the era of technology and science, which is assumed to assist and facilitate the medieval thoughts and traditions but the biased media growth, which seems to be the very heart of imperialism still silences those voices who cry out in dark.

No matter if we are in Conrad's age or in the post era of September 11th, the cultural "Others" are still intruders coming from another planet, whose beliefs, customs and habits are completely unknown and incomprehensible to the Westerners. There seems to be an inevitable link to the world ruling empire. "Today's era is dominated by American power, American culture, the American dollar and the American navy". (Pieterse, 2004, p.121)

Although the contemporary era is gifted with many digital instruments, such as TV, satellites, printed media, etc., still only a minority of people, like Conrad, have come to understand the true imperialistic nature of such political propagandas.

However irrespective of any race and religion, the main attempt of this study has been to evaluate the western imperialists toward the marginal voices. The voices, which seem to be unheard due to the deafening thunder of competition for power and authority. So what has to be done? Perhaps a shift in perspectives and narration, like the 'turn' that happened to Conrad and then his character Marlow will provide answers in order to meet a world without war. Hence the only way to break the shackles of imperialism and colonialism is to gain the right education of both east and west. This can be the only safe bridge of the right understanding of these two conflicting worlds, which have given a chaotic and apprehensive mood to the existence of mankind on this convulsive earth.

REFERENCES

- Achebe, Chinua. (1963). *An image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's Heart of Darkness*. In Robert Kimbrough (Ed.). New York, NY: Norton.
- Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin. (1998). *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London : Routledge.
- Brown, Dennis. (1989). *The Modernist Self in Twentieth Century English Literature*. Hampshire, NH: Macmillan.
- Harrison, Nicholas. (2003). *Postcolonial Criticism: History, Theory and the Work of Fiction*. Cambridge, England: Polity Press.
- Merriam Webster's *Collegiate Dictionary* (2000). Springfield: Merriam-Webster Incorporated.
- Miller, J. H. (2005). *Conrad: The Twenty-First Century Figure*. New York, NY: Routledge Press.
- Mongia, Padmini. (2005, September 11). Between men: Conrad in the fiction of two contemporary Indian writers. *The Sunday Times*.
- Pieterse, Jan Nederveen. (2004). *Globalization or Empire?* New York, NY : Routledge Press.

- Said, Edward. (1978). *Orientalism*. London, England: Rutledge & Kegan Paul.
- Said, Edward. (1993). *Culture and imperialism*. London, England: Chatto Windus.
- Pakenham, Thomas. (1991). *The scramble for Africa*. New York, NY: Random House.
- Thomson, David. (1966). *Europe since Napoleon*. London, England: Longman.
- Zions, Henryk. (1982). *Joseph Conrad and Africa*. Nairobi, Kenya: Kenya Literature Bureau.